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ABSTRACT

The effects of ideological assumptions about teaching, learning, and the labor market and the impact of differing funding sources on community-based organizations' efforts to prepare immigrant/refugee women for jobs in the United States were examined through a study of programs sponsored by two San Francisco Bay area community organizations--the Women Immigrants' Group (WIG) and Community Advocates for Career Development (CACD). Staff and participants in the two programs were interviewed. The WIG program, which is staffed almost completely by volunteers, was formed in response to the needs of many low-income Asian immigrant women and is based on the principles of Freire and feminism and a commitment to "transformative" education. The CACD program, which began in the 1960s as a church program for Chinese immigrants, now works to provide tools of empowerment to diverse communities and offers job training, internship, and job placement services to immigrants from all areas and to displaced workers. The study revealed how the ideological underpinnings of the WIG program and funding constraints of the CACD program can shape workplace programs serving immigrant women. It was concluded that, although both programs have participants' interests at heart, neither is able to fulfill its commitment because of internal and external constraints. (Contains 20 references.) (MN)

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Immigrant Women, English Literacy Programs, and Work in the United States: A Look at How Ideology and Funding are Shaping Workplace Education

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Introduction

In a recent issue of *USA today* the cover story was titled "The politically incorrect question of the 1990's: Can't Anyone Here Speak English? Exploring the Hidden Costs of the Nation's Language Gap" (February 28, 1997: 1A). **[See Figure 1]** In this article, not too surprisingly, consumers and employers alike bemoan their fate in this ever increasingly non-English-speaking, ethnically diverse society. The hidden difficulties the title alludes to include: 1) having your son's hair sheered instead of trimmed by the barber in Long Beach; 2) being unable to successfully order chicken McNuggets from the McDonald's drive-through window in Ohio; 3) having difficulty communicating with foreign-born physicians; and 4) being unable to decipher a foreign-born graduate instructor's English in university-level classes. On a grander scale, according to some economists, "poor English skills among foreign-born residents cost more than $175 billion a year in lost productivity, wages, tax revenue and unemployment compensation" (8A). Limited English speakers, it seems, are causing everything from airline crashes and medical foulups to increasing difficulties in the workplace and an upwardly spiraling national debt.

In the wake of recent nationwide welfare reform efforts, and with complaints such as those just cited on the rise, there is increasing interest in workplace literacy programs that successfully help to prepare adults, particularly non-native English speaking adults, for the American workplace. To date, however, assessment of program outcomes has been scant at best (see Hull 1992; 1997 for a review of this literature). Furthermore, although in places like NYC alone there are waiting lists of an estimated 50,000 people wanting to take English, the national funds allocated for such education remain meager, as does support within the private sector, where employers argue on the one hand that providing training is too costly, yet complain on the other that their employees can't function adequately.

In response to this dearth of empirical work, my dissertation project focuses on how three workplace literacy and job training programs attempting to help prepare members of immigrant and refugee communities for jobs in the United States. **[See Figure 2]** The two programs[1] I describe here are both community-based, they are located in the San Francisco Bay Area, and although their social agendas,

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[1] I spent between four and six months at each of three sites observing classes, interviewing staff and participants, attending staff and teacher meetings, volunteering in various capacities, and becoming familiar with the programs' goals, curriculum and organization.

curricular design and sources of funding distinguish them from each other in many important ways, both organizations purport to have the interests of participants at heart, and seek to provide the necessary tools members of immigrant and refugee communities need to function successfully in the American workplace. While I don't want to belabor the point, let me acknowledge that 'success' is a slippery term, one which is defined differently by the workplace literacy programs, the participants, and by employers, educators and politicians as well.

While conducting this research, I spent six months at each of three sites observing classes, interviewing staff and participants, attending staff and teacher meetings, volunteering in various capacities, and becoming familiar with the programs' goals, curriculum and organization. In what follows, I will attempt to show how different two CBO's can be, regardless of their common concerns, and how ideological assumptions about teaching, learning and the labor market, as well as differing funding sources serve to shape and constrain each program in significant ways. Although CBO's constitute a small percentage of the educational programs available to adult immigrants, their grassroots beginnings often make them ripe environments for trying out new approaches to teaching and learning -- at least in theory -- and this tendency is one of the primary reasons I chose to explore these programs.

The Sites **[See Figure 3]**

WIG -- Women Immigrants' Group

The Women Immigrants' Group,[1] or WIG, was established in 1983 in response to the recognition of the needs of many low-income Asian immigrant women. Staffed almost completely by volunteers, WIG holds "workplace literacy" classes[2] in two Bay Area cities, serving primarily Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese women who work in the garment industry and in electronics manufacturing in Silicon Valley. Those who run the program have been active in organizing workers in local manufacturing and service industries, and the critical approach to literacy that they employ grows out of their labor organizing work.[3]

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[1] All proper names are pseudonyms.

[2] 'Workplace literacy' is a term used by some programs outside workplaces and describes content more than structure. While WIG uses the term to describe their program, many of the lessons are not strictly related to work, but center more broadly on women's issue, including topics like healthcare, etc.

[3] While the WIG staff sees the needs of these communities as being very different in some ways, they feel it is important to come together as Asian women, and rally around their common needs and experiences as immigrants in the United States.

WIG sees itself as "part of a global movement to improve the living and working conditions of immigrants, women, and workers." Based on the work of Freire, WIG's program claims to use a critical approach to literacy to help immigrant women develop the language skills and political understanding they need to better exercise their rights as workers, and the program seeks to enable women "to advocate for justice and dignity in their lives and workplaces." WIG staff express a commitment to "transformative" education, which they see as political in a Freirian sense (Freire, 1970; 1990), and which also stems from their feminist foundations. Sunday morning literacy classes are scheduled around these women's six-day work weeks and child care obligations, and the classes focus heaviiy on teaching language and social awareness that the staff feel will help immigrant women communicate more effectively with their bosses and co-workers, as well as in their daily lives.

These Freirian and feminist roots account for many of the program's strengths. For example, while traditional job training programs assume that their workers should accept low-paying, unstable jobs, WIG looks critically at the kinds of jobs available to low-income immigrant women, consequently, teachers and students explore the historical and socio-political forces that affect and define immigrant women's home and work experiences, attempting to help participants "rewrite" the world they live in, and trying to make it one where "their interests, identities, and legitimate aspirations are more fully present..." (Lankshear & McClaren, 1993:xviii). WIG staff recognizes the ways in which gender has the potential to shape immigrant women's lives in particular ways and this awareness informs decisions and actions at many levels.

While many advocates of a critical approach to literacy -- including myself -- believe that such an approach has the potential to help students "rewrite" their worlds, the data I'm about to discuss indicate that critical pedagogy can fall short -- something that seems to occur somewhere between the terms themselves -- between "critical" and "pedagogy." To look more closely at how this slippage occurs, I'm going to describe briefly some pieces of the curriculum. The first example, three lessons on rape and sexual harassment, illustrates misarticulation between ideology and pedagogy, while the second example, a seminar on catching and eating fish caught in the local harbor, demonstrates a better fit between the two.

Participation at the site

During the semester in which I was a participant-observer I co-taught an intermediate class with a graduate of the workplace literacy program, a woman from Hong Kong who I'll call Amanda. Members of our class were Chinese, and were all literate in their first language.

Analysis of Lessons on rape crisis hotline, emergency room help, and sexual harassment

[See Figure 4] Spanning several weeks there were three related lessons on: 1) calling the rape crisis hotline; 2) emergency room rights; and 3) sexual harassment. All three lessons were presented in the form of "dialogues," and distributed to teachers the week before the lesson was to be taught. Although students had some input in "community meetings," teachers participated minimally in developing curriculum, which was designed primarily by the workplace literacy coordinator. She chose topics, wrote the dialogues, assembled the visual aids, and decided what vocabulary and questions would be included. While she was paid to do this, it appeared not to be in keeping with the program's stated philosophy.

First, it seems contrary to the inclusive orientation WIG espouses. In a training session for volunteers, WIG staff emphasized, echoing Freire, that "education is not neutral," and they explained the differences between "banking education" and the "problem-posing method." I was both excited by their orientation and hard put to reconcile it with how this information was imparted to us as volunteers, that is, via a presentation rather than a discussion.

Second, the dependence on pre-written dialogues contradicts the very notion of dialogic education. Moreover, from the point of view of language acquisition, the dialogues circumvent the need for students to grapple with the language, and to build on topics that evolve directly from their concerns and experiences. This last issue seems to me a crucial one in light of critical pedagogy's as well as WIG's articulated commitment to putting students in charge of their own learning.

Furthermore, a look at the vocabulary and questions indicates a willingness to decide for students not only what can be discussed, but how it can be interpreted. While it was not the case for all lessons, in these three, immigrant women are portrayed as victims of gender, class and racial prejudice. Although they are undeniably victims of such abuse, this positioning of them by the curriculum indicates an assumption on the staff's part that the women are unaware of these issues, or, perhaps it's more accurate

to say, not aware of them in the "right" ways. My sense of the women based on teaching and interviews was that they had their own equally insightful ways of defining, and coping with, such events; yet, it was striking how, in contrast with other lessons, the women remained largely silent during these. The way the lessons were organized silenced them not because the material was uncomfortable, and there is certainly that aspect of it,[1] but because the tone and structure, the assumption of victimization, the vocabulary itself, seemed to undermine genuine conversation.

In considering further the way ideology shapes curriculum here, a look at classroom participation structure (Cazden, 1988; Goodwin, 1990; Mehan, 1982; Philips, 1972) is helpful. Communication in the sense of exchanging information and ideas was limited, and classroom interaction and conversation were mediated almost entirely through the teachers. In addition, the questions attached to each lesson, while potentially helpful, turned the teachers into questioners and framers of issues, and the students into respondents, and potential absorbers of very particular political positions. Because the issues had already been shaped, there was little room for the women to formulate questions and pose problems, a part of the process essential to the potential "rewriting" of their worlds. Despite this set-up, the women had clear notions about what was relevant, which they illustrated during the sexual harassment lesson.

On the day we taught this lesson, after completing the dialogue and going over the vocabulary, following protocol, I suggested to my co-teacher Amanda that we go over the questions (see overhead). However, instead, Amanda spoke briefly with the women in Chinese, and then informed me that what they really wanted to do was: 1) talk about how to ask the price of something at the grocery store; and 2) go over greetings with the cashier, since they were unsure of how to respond to conversational routines with store clerks. Abandoning the sexual harassment materials, this is what we did for the rest of class. While such a shift was welcome as far as Amanda and I were concerned, there was a sense that we as teachers were somehow failing our students by letting them stray to such mundane, everyday topics.

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[1] It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the psychological impacts of this lesson material, however, the material did raise concerns in my mind about the seeming naiveté of asking women to redefine sexual relations with their husbands, by defining unwanted sex as rape. In my mind, there were potentially serious psychological, physical, and economic repercussions to such redefinitions, and I was disturbed, not that the questions were being raised, but that this was done without providing any support for women outside the classroom -- psychological or otherwise -- who might meet with resistance or violence as a result of their actions. If one encourages "dialogue followed by reflection and action," as Freire suggests, I believe one also has a responsibility to deal with the potential repercussions of that process.

I'll return to this issue in a moment, but for the time being I'd like to describe an event at WIG that occurred outside the classroom context, and which seemed to provide an opportunity for the women to examine critical issues by creating a situation in which genuine personal interest and investment were central. Although the event I'm about to describe was by no means accidental, it is striking that the student engagement WIG had hoped to provide in the formal curriculum seemed more available in non-classroom interactions such as the one described below.

The fish demonstration

In a demonstration sponsored by WIG on how to prepare fish caught in local waters. In addition to illustrating a more direct link between ideology and pedagogy, this seminar highlights WIG's attention to local issues of concern to these communities. In the coastal area where these women live, people, many of whom are from low-income communities, fish to supplement the food they purchase, which can lead to their disproportionate ingestion of chemicals.[1] In order to address this danger WIG staff invited a local environmental group to do a demonstration for participants on how to prepare and cook fish in ways that minimize ingestion of toxins and carcinogens.

After classes one Sunday in March, three people from a local environmental group arrive at the WIG site. In the main meeting room, students and teachers are assembled around a large center table, and amidst chatting, smiles, and informal greetings, the demonstration begins. On a flipchart behind the presenter is a colorful cross-section drawing of a fish, **[See Figure 5]** diagrammed in Chinese. The young woman speaks in English about the increasing levels of water pollution, and the dangers of eating too much fish caught locally, while one of her companions translates. As she pulls out a fish, a knife and cutting board, and begins to clean and prepare it, she queries the participants about how they like to cook their fish, how often their families eat it, whether or not they eat the heads, skin, guts, and so on, combining genuine questions about participants' daily practices with passing along information of a

[1] To give an idea of how serious this problem is, the presenters cautioned pregnant women and children under six years of age not to eat fish from the bay more that once or twice a month. In contrast to these recommended amounts, one presenter told me that many people in these communities eat bay fish several times a day. Their warning is based on research conducted by local officials and by the organization itself, however, one presenter pointed out that the official research is inaccurate, that is, not cautious enough, since official research does not include in evaluations of chemical levels all the parts of the fish eaten in these communities, such as skin, heads, the organs, etc., where toxins are most heavily concentrated. Consequently, toxins are an even bigger problem than they appear to be, such environmental hazards hitting low-income communities hardest.

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political nature. This exchange of information continues until the fish has been deheaded, skinned, and cleaned. Throughout the demonstration, the women smile, talk to each other, and lean forward to get a better view of what the presenter is doing -- their attentiveness and interest are apparent.

Although the information imparted during the demonstration is of a political nature, as was the case in the lessons on rape and sexual harassment, it is presented in a way that allows participants to bring the new information into discussions of their daily lives. They are engaged on a number of levels from the very concrete act of how to prepare and cook locally caught fish most safely, to which communities are most likely to be affected by water pollution, and why. While the presenter's role here places her in the center of the communication wheel, there is more interaction between participants than is usually the case in classes, and there is more effort to find out about what the women already know, thus tying the new information to their established ways of knowing and doing. This genuine questioning invites the women to participate more fully in understanding how efforts to nourish their families might well be undermining family health.

WIG Discussion

It may seem unreasonable to compare a workplace literacy class with a seminar given their differing agendas, but, there are some important connections to be made, particularly in relation to the enactment of a critical pedagogy. **[See Figure 3 again]** First, the give and take between the presenter and participants, and among participants themselves serves as a useful model for restructuring the classroom, by simply distributing turns at talk and the sharing of information. It also removes the teacher from being the primary person to frame issues and solutions. In addition, the assumption that the women already have their own agendas, not necessarily "political" ones, but agendas nonetheless, invites them to speak about the issues rather than silencing them by putting them in the sole position of respondent to an already-written conversation.

Several underlying assumptions come into focus here. First, WIG downplays the importance of teaching the language of practical daily life, and sees what they call "survival English" as peripheral to the political struggles these women face. For WIG staff, then, language itself, "survival English" as they call it, is relegated to the realm of the apolitical, and therefore takes a back seat to the socio-political agenda.

Second, the willingness of WIG staff to assume victimization on the part of participants is troubling. When given the chance, the women could articulate exactly what they wanted to know more about.

Educators have struggled in recent years to rethink teaching and learning in a multitude of ways, and critical pedagogy has attempted to help teachers and students do this. What we can learn from the above examples is that it is perhaps necessary to reframe notions of "political" in these workplace literacy classes, to broaden such notions, and to reconceptualize the teaching and learning of everyday language AS political work. While much attention has been paid to how power and politics are embedded in institutions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Foucault, 1979) perhaps not enough has been given to how they can be inscribed in language practices and ways of participating in the classroom. Clearly, the women who participated in these classes had their own agendas, which included learning the language of the everyday. For them, learning this language, this "survival English," IS political, as it allows them to re-imagine who they are, and to re-position themselves in this new cultural context, not just theoretically, but in everyday life, where issues of power are confronted on a daily, sometimes hourly basis. As Australian educator Barbara Bee has said, "the personal in women's lives is the political" (1993).

Keeping these examples from the WIG site in mind, I'd like to turn to a very different kind of community-based program, one in which, like Women Immigrants' Group, opportunities for critical issues to surface also occur more readily outside the formal classroom context, but for very different reasons.

CACD -- Community Advocates for Career Development

[See Figure 6] Community Advocates for Career Development, or CACD, held its first volunteer-taught classes in the basement of a San Francisco Chinatown church in response to the needs of mainly Chinese immigrants during the 1960's. Today, CACD's mission is "to provide tools of empowerment to... diverse communities... [S]ervices have grown to include career counseling, computer and employment training, job placement and self-employment programs, workplace literacy classes, citizenship training, after-school and summer programs for children and youth, and English language instruction and parenting support for families" (*Annual Activities Report*, 1994-1995). CACD promotes "community empowerment through jobs and education." Now serving a range of immigrant and refugee

groups, including a large number of individuals from the former Soviet Union, from Southeast Asia, Latin America, and from China, CACD trains immigrants, refugees and displaced workers.

During the fall of 1996, I observed their Clerical Training Program, which provides 18 weeks (over 500 hours) of instruction, includes a 9-week unpaid internship, and subsequently places graduates in jobs at an average rate of between 85-90%, a figure of which CACD's job placement coordinators are very proud. Among similar training programs, CACD's is one of the most extensive in terms of the range of programs offered, and length of training. Especially with recent budget cuts there has been a tendency in workplace training to move to very short term kinds of solutions -- weekend workshops, one-day seminars, and very short term, shot-in-the-arm, kinds of programs.

The importance of funding for CACD

Unlike the Women Immigrants' Group, CACD depends heavily on government grants which have myriad stipulations about who can be served, for how long, what they can be taught, etc. Although they receive some support from private foundations, they are funded largely through the Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA), which is administered through San Francisco's Private Industry Council (PIC). CACD staff are very familiar -- perhaps too familiar -- with the assessment requirements associated with such funding. They screen people before admitting them, assessing their English skills and determining their "flexibility and commitment" to the program, in an attempt to choose only those individuals who have a high enough level of English to "function successfully in the workplace," and who are likely, in the organization's eyes, to finish the program. While this eliminates many individuals based largely on language skills, it is necessary for CACD's success, that is, financial solvency, since their support is received in increments, one chunk coming as people are admitted to the program, other monies being made available *only* after participants have completed the program, and some being disbursed when participants have finally, if things go well, been placed in jobs. This tightly scripted money in turn makes for a tightly articulated curriculum -- one which is extremely functional in nature -- and it creates an urgency at the job placement end of things which does not always favor the students' interests -- something articulated to me by several students who were unhappy with the kinds of jobs they were being offered.

In contrast to WIG then, where the *kinds* of jobs available to immigrants, and to women in particular, are considered (from a theoretical stance), CACD does not dwell on such issues, but focuses more intently on finding students jobs. In addition, while CACD can't guarantee jobs for everyone in the program, they do promise that those who are offered jobs will receive at least $6.25 or more per hour. Beyond this dollar amount though, there is less concern on CACD's part than perhaps there should be for the quality of experience or sense of satisfaction as defined by immigrants and refugees themselves. I'll return to this shortly, but first let me describe the participants and the Clerical Program curriculum.

The Clerical Program

Although CACD used to offer four to five training programs over the course of a year, budget cuts during the past two years currently limit the number of sessions offered yearly to two -- one in the fall, and one in the spring. The class I observed during the Fall of 1996 included 24 individuals. Because clerical work tends to be feminized, there were only two men in the class. Of the 24 students, 12 were from China, 7 were from the former Soviet Union (Belorussia, Ukraine, Latvia, Siberia, and Moscow), the remaining 5 were from Burma, the Philippines, and Vietnam. In contrast to the women at WIG, many of whom had very little education, all but 3 members of the CACD class had completed high school. Three had A.A. degrees, seven had four-year college degrees, and two had done graduate work. Class members had a variety of backgrounds, and students' previous professions included mechanical and design engineers, people who had worked in government, an accountant, a music teacher, a seamstress, and a nurse, to name a few.

Curriculum at CACD and Staff Relationship with "Students"

In two words, CACD's curriculum is best described as functionally oriented, and maintains a fairly skills-based approach to teaching and learning. (What I mean by 'skills-based' is that certain work-related knowledge was seen as teachable and learnable in a non-work setting, and thus, appears to be conceived of as discrete and isolable from the context of work.) The curriculum aims to equip people as quickly as possible with what they need to find and keep jobs. Thus, specific classes are taught, such as telephone, filing, typing, 10-key-by-touch, job search skills, and workplace communication. The last class represents the organization's effort to deal with the more cultural aspects of communication by talking

about issues such as making requests, making small talk, what to do when your boss makes a mistake, or how to deal with two differing sets of instructions, both from people in positions of authority, etc.

The classroom set-up and teaching style is traditional in several ways: the teacher stands at the front of the room where she can write on the blackboard and call on students, which she does systematically in order to give everyone a chance to talk; there is a great degree of call and response drilling of anything from lists of American names (telephone skills) to pre-written dialogues that the teacher and students practice together (workplace communication); cloze exercises are used extensively in both oral and written contexts; and there is a performative orientation to demonstrating that one has understood and mastered an exercise -- students are "tested" in front of the class in some cases to show that they have understood the content of a certain lesson.

Despite the traditional appearance of the class, however, there is a relaxed atmosphere: deadlines for finishing "assignments" and turning in "homework" such as sample job applications or revisions of their resumes are loose; there is considerable talk among members of the class between and during exercises; and the teacher and job placement coordinators make themselves available at lunch and between classes to answer questions either about jobs or about the curriculum. While participants are treated as "students" in many ways, there is also the recognition that they are adults going through difficult transitions in their lives, and the staff makes an effort to support them both within and outside the classroom. For example, teachers and job coordinators frequently consult one another about various job openings and which students would be likely to do well at which job sites. In addition, computer facilities are made available to participants during non-school hours, and some students return months or even years after their "graduation" to get advice, look at job listings, and use the computers. Recently, CACD has started to organize an "alumni association," whose aim is to provide a job network for CACD graduates. Some former students are quite well-connected now in the San Francisco business community, and they demonstrate their ongoing gratitude and commitment to CACD by making donations to the organization, and by keeping in touch with staff and teachers, some of whom have been at CACD for over a decade.

Job placement at CACD

In the Clerical Training Program at CACD, there are a handful of part time teachers, and two job placement coordinators who do all outreach and job placement for the participants. While considerable effort is made to match students' skills with the kinds of jobs that would best suit them (in the staff's eyes), some participants articulated dissatisfaction with the kinds of jobs they were being offered for a number of reasons: 1) some felt the jobs and pay they were being offered were not commensurate with their skills and training, this was especially true for those who had been professionals in their country of origin; 2) others did not want to work in a non-English speaking environment (for example, some of the Chinese participants expressed a desire *not* to work in a Chinese business, since they wanted to have an opportunity to speak English at work); and 3) several participants said they felt pressure from CACD job placement staff to take jobs not because the job itself was good, but because the job coordinator was telling them that if they didn't take a certain job, that they were going to jeopardize CACD's reputation, and future students would suffer as a result. Although all three reasons raises concerns, the last merits further comment here.

Informal job counseling at CACD

Jessica's Job Dilemma

Jessica, a shy, soft-spoken 29 year-old woman, with a B.S. in Physics from a university in her home country of Burma[1], was one of the first in the class I observed to be offered a job. Jessica had been in the U.S. for less than six months at that point, and was unsure of how to negotiate new jobs either with potential U.S. employers or with CACD job staff. She would, it turned out, need to do both. The day I spoke with her, which was two months into the program, she explained to me that in the last two weeks she had gone for an interview and a drug test at a local company, and had, as of that morning, been offered an entry level clerical position. The employer wanted her to start the following Monday, however, one of the job placement counselors had just notified her that she had been invited to interview for a second job with a different company. The differences between the two jobs were considerable. Most

[1] Although Jessica grew up in Burma, she was of Chinese descent, her parents having moved there when she was small. According to her, she identified with both cultures and spoke Chinese and Burmese.

notably, the salary at the first was $8.00/hour (approximately $16,000 yearly), while the yearly salary at the second was $24,000. Needless to say, Jessica was tempted to find a way to stall the first employer until she could interview at the second site, however, this would involve some considerable maneuvering since even if the interview went well, it could be some time before the second employer got back to her, and in the meantime, she risked losing the first job offer.

It was unclear whether the two job placement counselors were communicating poorly with each other, and thus were working at cross-purposes, or whether they simply felt obligated to tell her about the second invitation even though she would subsequently be actively discouraged from taking it, however, it is significant that at least one counselor told her she could not accept the interview at the second site because this would give CACD a bad reputation[1]. Over lunch break in the classroom, where much informal counseling and dialogue occurred among participants, with me, and sometimes with the teacher, several members of the class and I discussed Jessica's options with her. They asked me what I thought she should do, what I would do in her position[2], and we talked through various scenarios, considering as many possibilities as we could. Ultimately, Jessica felt trapped not just because of her sense of obligation to CACD, but because she knew that if she said 'no' to Employer A, that there was also no guarantee that Employer B would take her. This could be a problem in the sense that CACD's policy in regard to finding jobs (and internships) for students (and it makes good sense), is that they attempt to find everyone at least one interview before they start offering second interviews to the same person. In other words, she knew the job coordinators would only make her an offer once before proceeding with inquiries for all other members of the class, so it might be a couple more months, or perhaps never, that she got another offer. This rather uncertain prospect, combined with pressure from at least one of the job placement coordinators, led Jessica to leave the training program only half way through -- to go to work -- and accept the first job she was offered, a job she expressed dissatisfaction with, not only at the time, but in months to come.

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[1] If this had been a one-time occurrence, it would have led to my interpreting this as an accident. However, on several occasions different participants mentioned that they felt pressured by one job placement counselor in particular to take a job that they really didn't want. This led me to believe that there was more to it than simply miscommunication between the job placement counselors.

[2] I told her that if I had the resources, I would try to stall for time with Employer A, and go to the interview with Employer B. Obviously, many people don't have the financial resources to do this, and we talked about this too.

In summary then, Jessica was pushed into a job for several reasons. First, CACD job placement personnel put pressure on her to take the first position she was offered. Second, in turn, although they felt somewhat uneasy about doing this[1], they also felt as if they didn't have a choice since CACD had obligations to other members of the class. Third, CACD's funding depends on job placement, thus they had that incentive as well to push participants to take positions. The pressure to place people in jobs due to funding, however, is complicated further when cultural and psychological dimensions of immigration are considered.

I saw Jessica two months later at the class "graduation" ceremony. She was thrilled to see her classmates and teachers who she said she missed very much, and, when I asked her how she was doing at her job, with tear-filled eyes she tightly grasped my hand, and rather haltingly told me that it was okay, but that she wasn't very happy there. She emphasized how short a time she had been in the United States, and said that she needed both more training and more time to adjust to the U.S. in order to have a chance at finding a better job, or at least one more to her liking. In short, she had felt thrust into an unfamiliar job market sooner than she would have liked.

It seems that the push to work was also a shove towards an emotional and psychological edge that was acknowledged not only by CACD staff in conversations I had with them about immigrants' and refugees' needs for time to adjust to a new culture and way of life, but is also documented in the literature (Shepherd, 19xx; Shepherd & ??, 19xx), which confirms that newly arrived immigrants and refugees who are asked to take on too much too soon, sometimes fall apart, quite literally, as a result[2]. Many, and this is not so surprising really, are unable to hold down jobs for long periods of time because they continue to deal with a multitude of complex cultural adjustment issues which are rarely addressed in such training programs, regardless of the staff's awareness of such issues. CACD is a good example if this in some ways. While the staff was acutely aware of and sympathetic to these issues, due to their own funding

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[1] Although I did not feel at liberty to discuss Jessica's case specifically with them because I feared they might interpret my inquiry as a criticism, I did ask them more generally about protocol for placing people, and so on, to get a better understanding of what the significant pressures were from their point of view.

[2] Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS) is common among certain groups if immigrants. Refugees in particular often suffer from this, and combined with pressures to function quickly in an unfamiliar environment, this can exacerbate efforts to adjust, and sometimes leads to severe stress, and, in extreme cases, mental breakdown. Obviously, while someone who fits this description may get a job, it is unlikely that they will keep it.

constraints they were not set up to help individuals with this level of cultural and psychological adjustment because it is not perceived by the powers with the purse strings as either necessary or worthwhile. This is certainly an area which merits further consideration by researchers, educators and immigrant/refugee advocates.

Finally, although my data do not directly address this issue, I wondered if any part if this interaction between Jessica and the job counselors could be accounted for at the level of cultural communication. Here, I will make what may seem a gross generalization, however, I do so in an effort to offer further possible explanation for the complex elements contributing to Jessica's decision/sense of obligation to take the first job she was offered. I have been told by many people of Asian descent with whom I have worked in these programs that one of the main differences they perceive between American and Asian cultures is the sense of obligation to, in the case of Americans, self, and in the case of Asians, family and society. With this in mind then, I wondered whether Jessica felt she had to make a decision that would fulfill her obligation to CACD, and to those who were helping her. It may also be significant that one of the job placement counselors -- the one who put pressure on Jessica to take the job -- was American born of Chinese descent, and that her own values and sense of duty led her to feel that this was a reasonable position to take -- that program participants should, in fact, feel a sense of duty to CACD first, and to themselves second, and that any action to the contrary might be interpreted as self-serving. Obviously, this observation is speculative; nevertheless, while such cultural elements are decidedly more difficult to trace, I raise the possibility here as another way of understanding why Jessica made the decision she did[1].

CACD Discussion

Jessica's experience raises some questions about how workplace literacy and job training programs should be organized to serve not only the needs of future (and hypothetical) employers, but more directly, to serve the needs of immigrants as perceived by the immigrants themselves. Aside from raising issues about funding constraints and functionally-based curricula, this example raises concerns about the

[1] Jessica declined to be interviewed, saying her English wasn't good enough. She asked me to call her back in another 6 months or so.

shortsightedness of policies which make more multi-dimensional, long-term programs -- ones that deal more directly with the emotional, psychological and gendered impacts if immigration -- nearly impossible. In CACD's defense, much counseling and advice did occur outside the classroom context precisely because staff and teachers were aware of the difficult adjustments immigrants face. On numerous occasions I saw students speaking with teachers and counselors, and at other times, participants recounted conversations they had had with CACD staff to me, asking my opinion as well. At other times, I was privy to staff and teacher conversations about students with regard to both progress in the program as well as job possibilities -- evidence of CACD's concern for participants as individuals.

Unfortunately however, the primary factors which seem to define the way CACD's program is set up are: 1) money; and, 2) policies attached to those funds. At present, it appears that neither participants' needs are well-served, nor are those of employers who often invest in individuals only to lose them several months down the road due to issues that literacy and job training programs are currently unequipped to address adequately. This will no doubt become an increasingly important issue to address in light of recent welfare reform, and the limelight that will inevitably come to shine more brightly on job training, career development, and workplace literacy programs in the very near future.

Summary/Suggestions

The ideological underpinnings at a program like WIG, and the funding constraints at CACD illustrate the ways such forces can shape workplace literacy programs serving immigrant women. While both WIG and CACD have participants' interests at heart, neither is able to fulfill their commitment due to internal constraints in one case, and external constraints in the other.

[See Figure 7] These findings suggest that we need to reconcile the voices of employers and immigrants, and part of this entails listening more closely to how immigrants frame their own educational needs. In addition, more connections must be made between ideology and pedagogy (as we saw at WIG), and between policy and pedagogy (in the case of CACD, where funding and policy constrain the program considerably). We need to be less haphazard and whimsical about allocating funds for adult education, and with welfare reform around the bend, thinking seriously about job retention and program outcomes is

crucial. Placement isn't enough, people need more help keeping their jobs once they have them. Additionally, as CACD's director said to me:

> Our society tends to -- you know they throw away a McDonald's bag, they throw away their people. It doesn't make any sense. I've seen a lot of people thrown away in the last 10 years. Just dumped. You know, as a culture here in this country, we don't invest in people very much.

As she says, we need to invest more in people by providing serious training with an eye toward longterm solutions. Finally, programs need to see individuals as more multi-dimensional and historical beings who relocate and enter a foreign job market not just by choice, but due to political, social and gendered forces sometimes beyond their control. Workplace literacy then, is neither simply about being able to analyze one's position in the world, nor is it solely about having a set of finite, functional "skills" for the workplace. Rather, we need to address these women's needs from a more complex, multi-faceted perspective, taking into account the social and personal forces that shape their lives.

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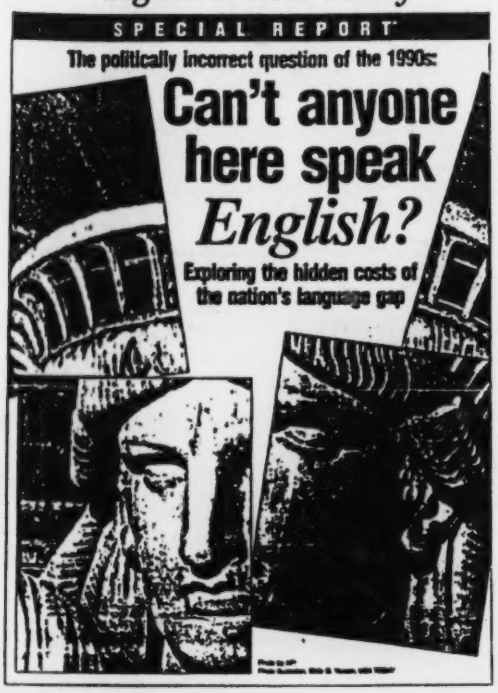
Figure 1: *USA Today*


SPECIAL REPORT
The politically incorrect question of the 1990s:
Can't anyone here speak English?
Exploring the hidden costs of the nation's language gap

A consumer in Long Beach, California:
Everywhere I go -- the doctor's office, the eyeglass shop, fastfood restaurants -- I'm getting more frustrated. It's hard to buy anything when you can't communicate with people who aren't from here.

A student from Penn State University:
You'd look around the class (taught by an Indian graduate student)... and people's faces would be all scrunched up. It was amusing to a point, but then it became very painful. People would yell at her to slow down. Some compared notes after class.

A hospital employee in Burien, Washington:
There's a woman from Romania who takes x-rays at the hospital I work at. When you take them, the patient has to stay still. She'll say something to them and the patient won't understand her English and will step away and have to be exposed again to more radiation from the x-ray.

An economist:
Poor English skills among foreign-born residents cost more than $175 billion a year in lost productivity, wages, tax revenue and unemployment compensation.

Figure 2: Data Collection & Methodology

Site 1: Women Immigrants' Group WIG

Community-based organization which takes a critical, Freirian approach to teaching English "workplace literacy." Funded privately, largely by members of communities served. Active in organizing workers in the garment, hotel and electronics industries, WIG sees itself as "part of a global movement to improve the living and working conditions of immigrants, women, and workers."

Population/class time: Low-income women mainly from China, Korea and Vietnam attend class 2 hours/week.

Participation/interaction at site: Volunteer teacher, participant-observer, attended teacher meetings, special events for students, interviewed students and teachers.

Site 2: Community Advocates for Career Development CACD

Community-based organization with a range of training classes for adults, children, and displaced workers. Program observed was for clerical training, funded mainly through Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA), administered through San Francisco's Private Industry Council. Articulated commitment to promoting "community empowerment through jobs and education."

Population/class time: Low-income immigrants and refugees mainly from the former Soviet Union, China, and Southeast Asia attend classes 8 hours/day, 5 days/week, for 18 weeks, includes a 9-week unpaid internship. Job placement rate after completion of training is between 80-90%.

Participation/interaction at site: Volunteer conversation partner during lunch, participant-observer in classes, attended special events for students, interviewed students, teachers and administrators.

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****Time spent at each site:** Six months

****Types of data analyzed:** Fieldnotes, transcriptions of audiotaped interviews and classes, curricular materials, brochures, mission statements, other documents describing organizations.

****Primary methods of analysis:** Discourse analysis, participation structure, thematic/content analysis.

****Theoretical Perspectives informing analysis:** Sociocultural views of literacy and language learning, feminist perspectives on education, labor migration, adult/immigrant education.

Figure 3: Ways of Des-/Ins-cribing Critical Pedagogy

"Dialogue... is an existential necessity... Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education."
(Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970:77, 81)

The mission of education should be "to ensure that all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community, and economic life."
(The New London Group, *Harvard Ed Review*, Spring 1996:60)

A critical approach to literacy education is one where "concerted efforts are being made to understand and practice reading and writing in ways that enhance the quest for democratic emancipation, for empowerment of the subordinated, the marginalized Other."
(Lankshear & McClaren, *Critical Literacy*, 1993:xviii)

Critical literacy can "play an important part in attempts by subordinate groups to politicize themselves and to engage in action aimed at challenging existing structures of inequality and oppression and pursuing democratic alternatives." (Lankshear & McClaren, *Critical Literacy*, 1993:21)

"...[P]rofessors may attempt to deconstruct traditional biases while sharing that information through body posture, tone, word choice, and so on, that perpetuate those very hierarchies and biases they are critiquing."
(bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 1994:141)

"...[S]tudents are not merely positioned into discovering meanings; they also actively construct meaning by analyzing the 'real practices and events' that constitute their everyday lives."
(Giroux, *Critical pedagogy, the state, and cultural struggle*, 1989:143-4)

"All work done for the masses must start from their needs and not from the desire of any individual, however well-intentioned."
(Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970:83)

Figure 4: Vocabulary and questions for WIG lessons

Lesson on: Calling the rape crisis hotline

Vocabulary:

someone	need	afraid
boyfriend	was raped	confidential
anyone	was sexually assaulted	another
everything	was attacked	
language	talk/ speak/ tell	
Cantonese/Toisan/Mandarin		
speaker		

Questions:

What is happening in the dialogue?
What happened to Yi?
Why is she afraid to tell anyone? What else may she be worried about?
Why do you think men rape?
If a husband forces his wife to have sex when she does not want to, is it rape?
Have you or would you call a hotline if you needed help and support? If not, why?

Lesson on: Emergency Room Rights

Vocabulary:

hospital	wait/waiting	worried
emergency room	speak/speaks	many
people	fill out	tired
health insurance	take a seat	angry
form	will call	afraid
how		sad
please		quiet

Questions:

Why does Yi go to the emergency room? Why does her friend go with her?
Who are probably the people waiting in the emergency room? (are they white? are they rich?)
Do they have health insurance? Does racial and sexual discrimination happen in the emergency room?
What are Yi's rights at the hospital?

Lesson on: Sexual Harassment

Vocabulary:

co-workers	touch	during	so
lunch	look	about	uncomfortable
break	sexy	when	other

Questions:

What happened during lunch break? Why is Eve afraid?
What can Eve do if she wants to report John? What can Eve do if she does not want to report?
Do you think it is easy for men to get away with sexual harassment? Why?

Figure 5
The Fish Demonstration Diagram

保護健康的注意事項：

分散釣魚地點，避免集中一處。

各個釣魚地點的化學物質含量有所不同。您常到的釣魚地點很可能含有大量化學物質。因此，如不固定在某一處，而是分散到多一些地點釣魚，將有助於降低對化學物質的總接觸量。

食用多種魚類。

由於攝取食物的習慣不同，某些魚類會含有多一些化學物質。降低化學物質攝入量的辦法是少量食用多種不同魚類，而不要集中大量食用某種魚類，因為這種魚可能含有大量化學物質。

吃較小的魚。

某些化學物質會隨着魚齡的增長而在魚體內積聚。在同一魚類中，魚體越大，化學物質的含量也越高。例如，大條紋石鮨（striped bass）（超過36英寸）的汞含量可能比小條紋石鮨（18至20英寸）大二十倍之多。捕捉大魚固然有趣，但吃較小的魚却更為安全。如欲保存大魚，應把魚肉的一部分冷凍，並長期分批食用。

魚的烹製

只吃魚肉。

魚肉是最安全的食用部分。魚的內臟和肝臟一般含有更多化學物質。不要吃這些部分，也不要用其製成調味汁、湯汁或濃湯。

去除油脂。

很多化學物質，包括DDT殺蟲劑、多氯聯苯（PCBs）及戴奧辛（dioxins）等，是儲藏在脂肪中的。去除含脂部分，可減少對這些化學物質的攝取。魚背、魚肚及側線是脂肪所在（見下圖）。此外，剝去魚皮亦可去除皮下脂肪薄層。

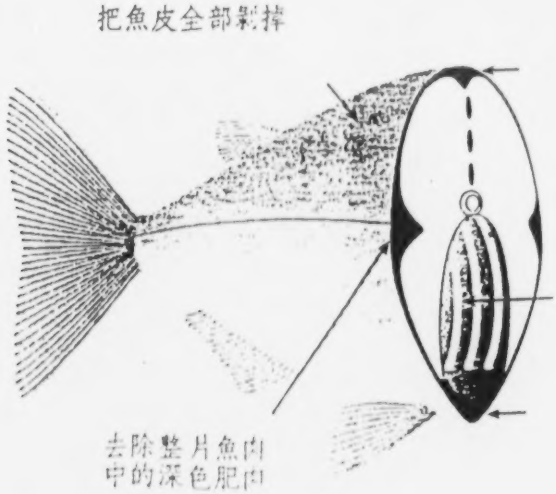

Figure 6: Overview of Findings from Site 2
Community Advocates for Career Development -CACD

Community-based organization with a range of training classes for adults, children, and displaced workers. Program observed was for **clerical training, funded through Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA)**, administered through San Francisco's Private Industry Council. Articulated commitment to promoting **"community empowerment through jobs and education."**

Population/class time: Low-income immigrants and refugees mainly from the former Soviet Union, China, and Southeast Asia attend classes 8 hours/day, 5 days/week, for 18 weeks, includes a 9-week unpaid internship. Job placement rate after completion of training is between 80-90%.

Main constraints on program:

***Funding**

***Policies attached to funding**

Constrain who can be served, for how long, in what ways

How constraints shape the program and manifest in participants' lives:

* Curriculum is functional, highly skills-based, little time deal with issues of acculturation and communication

* Not enough training time

* Participants suggest more focus on language learning/ESL

* Participants feel propelled into job market before they are ready

* Participants are sometimes obliged to take jobs they do not want

Figure 7: What Findings Suggest

* Both employers and immigrants must be served, programs must attempt to reconcile their needs and voices

*Listen more carefully to how immigrants frame their own educational needs, build more on what they already know

* Approach language teaching and learning *as* political action rather than viewing language as simply a workplace tool or skill

* Stronger connections between ideology and pedagogy, and between policy pedagogy

*Rethink distribution and amounts of funding for adult education

Especially with the consequences of welfare reform just around the corner:

* Pay far more attention to job retention and program outcomes

* Government and private sector must invest more in people up front by providing serious long-term solutions